

Art: the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

Therapy: treatment intended to heal or relieve a disorder.

How do these definitions come together to create Art Therapy?

Words to pick out are expression, emotional power, and heal. Art therapy uses the process of engaging in art making within a therapeutic relationship as a means to create positive internal change. It enables expression and communication. Feelings and emotions are expressed non-verbally. This can feel much less threatening to a child, who cannot put words together congruently to share how they are feeling or what is on their mind, than talking therapies. We all have thoughts and beliefs we are not fully conscious of. Expression through art can enable these to become unlocked and identified.

The therapist does not impose interpretations or judgement. This refers to the artistic merit of the work, to anything we may think the image represents, and to the child's thoughts and feelings. Being alongside the child on their recovery journey, the role of the therapist is to support the child in finding meaning to their process. They can start thinking about those hidden emotions that have surfaced.

Giving a space to the unconscious allows for painful memories and feelings to emerge. It is important that children and young people are well supported outside of therapy too. However, it also enables them to recognise their strengths and celebrate their successes. This is helpful in promoting a positive identity and building confidence and self-esteem.

The art therapist provides a regular, reliable, confidential space, in which the child receives focused attention. It might not always seem that there is anything happening in the moment. Sometimes sessions trigger feelings that arise later in the day. At other times intense emotions will be present in the therapy session.

The art therapist uses the space provided to create a structured and confidential setting that promotes safety and containment. They offer a range of art materials so that children and young people have a selection to choose from. They can draw, paint or make things. They might engage in art making alone or with the therapist.

The therapist does not usually set a theme and the pace of the work is set by the child or young person. Direction may however be given as necessary and appropriate for the space to be physically and emotionally safe.

The relationship between the therapist and client is central in art therapy practice. A relationship is an exchange of energy. In therapy it is one that enables a sharing of information that creates transformation. It is powerful in its own right.

The role of the relationship is paramount to therapy with regards to enabling healing and is held in mind when agreeing the terms of therapy:

Each individual therapy session is usually 45 minutes. It takes place on the same day and time each week, in the same room.

Group work can be offered as appropriate.

The therapist will discuss and agree boundaries with the child to create trust and a safe environment.

The therapist will store the work safely until the end of therapy.

The therapist will let the child know in advance of up-coming breaks, as well as preparing the child well in advance for the ending of the therapy.

The length of time therapy is needed can vary from weeks to months. Therapy is planned to meet the child's needs.

For further information please contact:

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Samantha is a qualified Art Therapist with over 10 years experience working with children and young people. She has worked in a residential setting and for a foster care agency, giving her wide experience in dealing with Looked After Children. Through this work she has gained extensive skills in working with trauma and the various forms it takes.

For more details please visit:

www.whiterosearttherapy.uk

White Rose Art Therapy

Art Therapy

with

Children & Young People

